

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Groton School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2006-2007

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Dates of On Site Visit: January 22nd and 23rd, 2007

Date of Report: January 30, 2007

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

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|---------------------------|---|
| Promising Practice | The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices. |
| Meets Requirements | The district/agency consistently meets this requirement. |
| Needs Assistance | The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance. |
| Needs Intervention | The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance. |
| Not applicable | In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries. |

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- A – General District Information
- C – Suspension and Expulsion Information
- H – Exiting Information

- Surveys
- Private school information
- Comprehensive plan
- Comprehensive system of personnel development plan
- Screening

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the Groton Area School District has an established ongoing child find system to locate, identify and evaluate children with disabilities, ages birth through 21 years of age, who may need special education. The district has an effective pre-referral and referral system in place to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay.

If a child with disabilities is referred or placed in a private school or facility, the district's comprehensive plan addresses the school's responsibility to ensure special education and related services are provided in accordance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Data-based decision-making procedures are used to review and analyze district data to determine that progress is being made toward the state's performance goals and indicators. The district reviews and analyzes data and revises policies and procedures if significant discrepancies are found between the long-term suspension and expulsion rates for children with and without disabilities.

The Groton Area School District ensures that an adequate supply of personnel are employed, properly supervised, fully licensed and certified to work with children with disabilities. The district implements procedures to determine personnel development needs and takes appropriate action to meet those identified needs.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The students with disabilities operate a school store which sells snacks, school supplies and clothing. All proceeds are used to purchase cooking supplies, craft supplies and appliances. All snacks have been approved by the school nurse and meet the wellness guidelines. Students stock the store and count the money. Activities conducted through the store provide real life experiences for students with disabilities.

The Junior Kindergarten implements a positive reinforcement program designed to increase "good" behavior. Each child has a small chart, which they wear as a necklace. The children are told that when caught being good they will receive a punch on their chart. Once the chart is full, the student gets to pick a prize. The program is also carried out in kindergarten in the afternoon.

The Groton Area Elementary School offers an after school homework program four days a week for 45 minutes after school. Any student is welcome and there is no cost associated with the program. This service is provided by district Para-professionals. They rotate the assignments and assist students with whatever their homework need may be. Participation may be influenced by teachers, parents or

the student. Unfinished homework assignments has decreased among certain students.

The Groton After School Program (GRASP), offers educational activities for children and peace of mind for parents, knowing their children are in a safe and happy environment before and after school hours. Daily components are nutrition and help with homework. Services offered include field trips, enrichment programs and weekly activities. The program is state licensed and provides quality care to children in kindergarten through sixth grade. The program is available every school day 7:00 to 8:00 am before school, 3:15 to 6:00 pm after school and 7:30 to 5:30 pm during the summer months. Family tuition is charged at an hourly rate.

The Groton Area Junior High/High School's At-Risk Program

The at-risk program is available to assist students who are having difficulties in the school setting with individual skill review, individual behavioral counseling, family assistance and outreach to assist teachers, students, and parents in removing the blocks of learning. The program is coordinated by the district counselor who also assists with such things as Saturday school and credit recovery activities.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- C – Suspension and Expulsion Information
- I – Age Placement Alternative Data
- K – Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
- Comprehensive Plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the Groton Area School District proved FAPE to all eligible children with disabilities. While the district has not had any students with disabilities suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days, policies and procedures are in place to assure that such students would be provided FAPE.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- A – General District Information
- Student File Reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the Groton Area School District provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered with the exceptions noted below. The district ensures proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. Reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility, with the exceptions noted in needs improvement and out of compliance.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded all tests listed on the prior notice/consent needs to be administered and parent input into the evaluation process needs to be documented.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded that students were dismissed from services without considering the need for evaluation.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees the Groton Area School District ensures proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. Through a review of student records, reevaluations were conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility. Parent input into evaluation was consistently documented and written notice/parent consent was obtained prior to dismissing a student from services.

Out of Compliance: Needs assistance

ARSD 24:05:30:17. Consent. "Consent" means that the parents have been fully informed in the native language or another mode of communication of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought in the native language or another mode of communication; the parents understand and agree in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which consent is sought; the consent describes that activity and lists any records which will be released and to whom; and the granting of consent by the parents is voluntary and may be revoked in writing at any time. If a parent revokes consent, that revocation is not retroactive (i.e., the revocation does not negate an action that has occurred after the consent was given and before the consent was revoked).

Through interview and a review of student records, the monitoring team identified one student who received behavior and autism evaluations which were not included on the written prior notice/consent. The written prior notice/consent for another student stated articulation would be assessed however there was no evidence the evaluation occurred. Another student IEP contained articulation goals with no link to an articulation evaluation.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- L – Complaints
- M – Hearings
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded parents are informed of their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The rights of a child are protected if no parent can be identified.

The district provides parents of children in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

The Groton Area School District has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint and due process actions that ensure compliance.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
- Comprehensive plan
- Student file reviews

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the Groton Area School District ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings and includes all required content. The IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. The district ensures that transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, including student strengths and interests to prepare them for post school activities. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance need to consistently contain strengths, weakness and the student's involvement in the general curriculum. Annual goals and/or short term instructional objectives need to be measurable/observable, containing conditions, performance and criteria. The special education and related services to be provided need to include the specific service, amount of service and the location. Preschool IEPs need to include justification for placement statements.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under individual education program as concluded by the steering committee.

Through a review of student records, all areas identified by the steering committee as needing improvement were determined by the monitoring team to meet requirements.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Student File Reviews
- Comprehensive Plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the Groton Area School District ensures all eligible students receive services in the least restrictive environment with the supports they need for their successful participation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.